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#### NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES

Serving America's Heroes



## Volume 2, Issue 9 - Women Veterans Informer

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On August 25, 2015 the Military Women Across the Nation (MWAN) had their "Region ONE" conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. MWAN representative Louann Huskisson opened the conference and veteran Elynda Leader sang the National Anthem beautifully.

Guest speakers included Nevada Department of Veterans Services' very own Deputy Director, Willette Gerald and Lieutenant Colonel Patricia Falvey, both women are retired Air Force Veterans. Also, in attendance were the Women of the WAVES and Women Veterans of Nevada (WVON) who provided color guard services for the conference.



Louann Huskisson, master of ceremonies for the MWAN Conference

During the conference, Deputy Director Gerald spoke to women about identifying as veterans. She reflected on the current advancements of women in military service as well as their history and how every woman that has served should be proud to call themselves a veteran. In her speech she informed the audience about services and resources available to veterans through NDVS.

Retired Lieutenant Colonel Patricia Falvey spoke to her fellow veterans about the special moments that she experienced throughout her illustrious career. The retired Lieutenant Colonel started off as personnel officer, then moved on to be an Office of Special Investigations Agent (OSI) for the U.S. Air Force.



Deputy Director Willette Gerald for NDVS







After separating from active duty she transitioned into the Air Force Reserves. From there she provided support during the Desert Shield and Desert Storm conflicts and as the European Regional Coordinator for Post 9/11 Individual Augmentee activation.

From left to right: Bobi Oates (WVON), Retired Lieutenant Colonel Patricia Falvey, and Sheila Tuttle (WVON)

# Oldest Known U.S. Veteran Dies at 110 By Christopher Klein - August 20, 2015

Emma Didlake was a 38-year-old married mother of five when she answered her country's call. With the United States deep in the throes of World War II in 1943, she enlisted in the newly instituted Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and served with over 150,000 other corps members in non-combatant roles both at home and abroad. Didlake was among the first women other than nurses to serve within the ranks of the U.S. Army, and as an African-American in a still-segregated military, she was a trailblazer in more ways than one—not that she saw herself that way. "I didn't know I was breaking barriers," she told the San Antonio Express-News earlier this year after celebrating her 110th birthday on March 13, 2015.



"But I enjoyed doing what I was doing because I had committed myself to do just this."

Born in Boligee, Alabama, in 1905, Didlake grew up in Kentucky and married a coal miner. When she made the decision to join the war effort, she did not seek her husband's permission. "There wasn't no argument or anything like that, it was no trouble. I just did it," she told the San Antonio Express-News. "I wanted to do different things." For seven months, she served stateside as a private and a driver. For her commendable service, she earned the Women's Army Corps Service Medal, American Campaign Medal and World War II Victory Medal.

Didlake moved with her family to Detroit in 1944, according to the Associated Press, and soon after the end of World War II, she enlisted her services in another fight—the struggle for civil rights in America. Didlake joined the Detroit chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and two years ago she received a lifetime achievement award from the organization in recognition of her service. She was also an active member and educator at the Second Baptist Church of Detroit.

The woman known to her family as "Big Mama" outlived her husband and all five of her children before her death on Sunday at a long-term care facility in West Bloomfield, Michigan, where she had recently moved after turning 110. According to the San Antonio Express-News, Didlake credited her longevity in part to eating golden raisins that had soaked overnight in a pint of vodka.

Not even a month before her death, Didlake garnered headlines on July 17, 2015 when she took a whirlwind one-day tour of Washington, D.C., that was sponsored by a local chapter of the Honor Flight Network, a nonprofit organization that arranges free flights to the nation's capital for veterans to visit the memorials dedicated to wars in which they fought. Didlake visited the World War II Memorial, Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial and the changing of the guard at Arlington National Cemetery. She also toured the Women's in Military Service for America Memorial where she was presented with a copy of her official record.

The highlight of the trip was a White House visit and a meeting with President Barack Obama. "We are so grateful that she is here with us today," the president told the press as cameras whirred and clicked. "And it's a great reminder of not only the sacrifices that the greatest generation made on our behalf, but also the kind of trailblazing that our women veterans made, African-American veterans who helped to integrate our Armed Services. We are very, very proud of them."

"I'm saddened she's not here," Marilyn Horne told the Detroit Free Press after her grandmother's passing, "but glad that she got an opportunity to do everything in her life that she wanted to do, including meet the president."

"Emma Didlake served her country with distinction and honor, a true trailblazer for generations of Americans who have sacrificed so much for their country," President Obama said in a statement. "I was humbled and grateful to welcome Emma to the White House last month, and Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to Emma's family, friends and everyone she inspired over her long and quintessentially American life."

Out of the 16 million Americans who served in the military during World War II, fewer than 1 million now survive, and according to the U.S. Veterans Administration, veterans of that war are passing away at a rate of approximately 500 a day. With Didlake's passing, the oldest known American veteran is now Texan Richard Overton, who was born in May 1906 and served in World War II.

### 'Troubleshooter' takes over Reno VA office By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal - July 22, 2015



The 20-year U.S. Army veteran Sheila Jackson will assume command at the Reno Veterans Administration Regional Office. It may prove to be a near-impossible job. The office is notorious nationwide for its inefficiency in processing disability claims.

Two years ago, it led the nation in the amount of time needed for claims to be initially processed and completed with an average wait time of 539.3 days, according to data from the Department of Veterans Affairs statistics. Statistically, the office has improved immensely since then, with the average days to complete processing dropping to 241 days, according to the VA's July 2015 report.

Yet some veterans — and even most of Nevada's congressional delegation — feel Jackson is stepping into to a difficult situation. "Rome wasn't built in a day and the problems with the VA wasn't caused in a day," said Vicky Maltman, who is the Veterans in Politics auxiliary director for much of Northern Nevada.

"This mess has been years and years in the making and I don't expect things to change anytime soon."

Jackson is billed as one of the VA's top claims administrators. Still, Maltman is wary about what she can accomplish at the Reno VARO. "I am just not hopeful that anybody is going to be able to come in and clean up the mess that has been made," Maltman said. "I think it is going to take a couple of years to find out all of the problems in that division." Besides that, the Reno office is also one of the most politically-charged VAROs in the nation.

Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., has openly challenged VA officials in hearings in U.S. Senate committees because of the performance of the Reno office. Nevada's 1st U.S. House District Rep. Dina Titus, D-Las Vegas, is currently pushing to transfer the Reno's VARO to Las Vegas because of its poor track record and what Titus calls the VA's failure to attract quality talent to Reno. Titus and Heller are both active members of the Veterans Affairs Committee in their respective houses of Congress.

Both sought the resignation of former Reno VARO director Ed Russell, who was placed on administrative leave but not fired. Since then, the Reno VARO has been managed by two temporary directors.

"They are already making progress in that office in terms of reducing the backlog," Titus said. "But the key is she (Jackson) has got to turn morale around. They have some good employees but they don't know what to do because of the leadership is lacking." So they (my main concerns) are communication, transparency, hiring and getting staff morale turned around," Titus said. Titus said Jackson will have about "50 to 90 days" to show improvement in those areas. Jackson is expected to take control of the office between Sept. 21 and Sept. 30, congressional sources said.

Heller said he does not want to put pressure on Jackson by giving her a time table to reach goals. Yet his thinking on not far from Titus'. "It is going to take some time to turn this over and get the attitudes adjusted and everything else," Heller said. "To give her a year or six months or 16 months, I don't want to exactly hold her to a specific time line. But I would anticipate that we will have shown some real progress in the first six months to a year."

#### High praise from VA officials

Yet if anybody is up to the task as the new boss of the Reno VARO, it's Sheila Jackson, VA officials have told members of Nevada's congressional delegation.VA Under Secretary Allison Hickey, in a meeting with Nevada's 2nd U.S. House District Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Carson City, described Jackson as the best person for the job.

Members of the Nevada congressional delegation said Jackson was first noticed for her excellent work with claims while working in the VA office of Minneapolis-St. Paul. She accepted a transfer to the Los Angeles VARO when that office was in dire need of help. She most recently worked at the VARO in San Juan, P.R., according to a VA news release."(Under Secretary) Hickey said this lady (Jackson) has gone to places that are broken and fixed them," Amodei said. "Wherever she has gone, she has done a great job. She is a leader and she is a motivator. Hickey described her as 'this is just what they need in Reno,' and said that's why she selected her."

**Education:** Jackson has significant executive-level experience within the VA and holds a master's degree in business administration and a bachelor's degree in business management.

Military service: Prior to joining VA, Ms. Jackson served 20 years in the United States Army.

## Meet The Army's First Female Graduates Of Ranger School Task and Purpose - August 20, 2015

On August 21, 2015, Captain Kristen Griest and 1st Lieutenant Shaye Haver will become the first two women to graduate from the Army's elite Ranger School at Fort Benning in Georgia. The two female soldiers will graduate alongside 94 male counterparts, and are among a group of 20 women who qualified to attend the first gender-integrated Ranger School, which began on April 20, 2015.

For more than 120 days, Haver and Griest gut it out, overcoming exhausting hikes, brutal weather, sleepless nights, and simulated combat designed to test their reaction time and composure under fire.

Griest, a military police officer from Orange, Connecticut, and Haver, an Apache helicopter pilot from Copperas Cove, Texas are both graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

First Lt. Kristen Griest, (to the left) prepares for a static-line jump as part of an airborne exercise.

(below) First Lt. Kristen Griest participates in combat training during Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, in Georgia.

Photo by Spec. Nikayla Shodeen for the U.S. Army

(below) First Lieutenant Shaye Haver is shown in Ranger School training during the Mountain Phase in northern Georgia on July 12.

Photo by Pfc. Yvette Zabala-Garriga for the U.S. Army



(right) First Lt. Shaye Haver tackles an obstacle course at Fort Benning.

Photo by: Robin Trimarchi/Columbus Ledger-Enquirer via AP



## Retiring Marine meets the women who inspired her to join By Matthew L. Schehl - August 18, 2015

Gunnery Sergeant Francine Jarrett had recently graduated high school when she went with a friend to a recruiting office in 1995.

The Jamaican native immediately identified with the women in the poster. They were of different cultural backgrounds and didn't have a hard exterior — they looked like *women*, she said.

"I saw the poster, and they didn't have to say anything else; I wanted to join then and there," Jarrett told Marine Corps Times. "They were feminine, they were gorgeous, and they were Marines."

The task of finding the perfect retirement gift fell to Bourgeois last November when he came onboard EPME as Jarrett's replacement. "You want to give something to somebody that means something to them, something that has some type of intimate connection to them ... something unique to that person," Bourgeois said. "I knew I struck gold."

Bourgeois then embarked on a six-month odyssey to turn the idea into reality. It took him almost four months just to find a copy of the poster in good condition, and another two months to track down the retired Marines through social media.

"The master sergeant identified me and asked if I could sign the poster," said Dr. Marialena Bridges, a counselor at nearby Brooke Point High School in Stafford, Virginia. "I emailed him back and said I'd love to come to the retirement ceremony."

As luck would have it, the other two women, Gemignani and Johnson, did not live far from Quantico either. Bourgeois asked them to attend as well.

"The next thing I knew, he said he'd contacted the other two women and asked them to come," Bridges said. "The three of us were so excited to see each other."



Gunnery Sgt. Francine Jarrett reacts in disbelief at her retirement ceremony as she is presented with a signed copy of the recruiting poster that persuaded her to enlist 20 years ago. Photo: SSgt Derek A. DeSensi/Marine Corps



Gunnery Sgt. Francine Jarrett is joined by the Marines, then noncommissioned officers, who inspired her to enlist: from left, Dr. Marialena Bridges, Suzanne Gemignani and Eborah Johnson. (Photo: Courtesy John Bridges)

Jarrett's retirement ceremony also became a reunion for the women, who had not seen each other since the photo was taken more than 20 years ago.

"It almost feels like a divine intervention," Bourgeois said. "As many times as Murphy's Law exudes itself in our daily lives, this was the one situation where everything that could go right went right ... everything."

Bourgeois brought out the wrapped gift at the conclusion of the hour-long ceremony.

Jarrett was astonished blown away when she opened the framed, autographed poster. Bourgeois then said that the women were present and asked them to come forward.

"After 20 years they were here to see me retire out of the Marine Corps," Jarrett said. "I was shocked, overwhelmed and speechless, but it was... unforgettable."

#### **Career Corner**



Energy jobs offer promising opportunities, whether you are an experienced worker or just starting your career.

These jobs are active, hands-on, rewarding, and available in every state, in an industry that is stable and growing. With many of the nation's energy workforce either retiring or otherwise departing their jobs during the next five years, the energy industry is working now to develop programs to attract and train new workers for energy-related generation, transmission, and distribution careers.

Get information on key jobs in the energy industry. http://www.troopstoenergyjobs.com/



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Veterans' Day

What Veterans need to know about applying to and working at the new

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If you're looking for a new and rewarding career with a dynamic and modern company that is changing the future, then come join us at:

American Legion, Fred Anderson Post 16 90 N. Ada St. Fallon, NV 89406

Time(s): 12-1 pm & 6-7 pm

Date: Thursday, 03 September 2015

Hosted by Fallon JobConnect and the American Legion, Post 16



Thursday, September 17, 2015 10:00 AM- 1:00 PM Cashman Center 850 N. Las Vegas Blvd. Las Vegas, Nevada 89101



Reno Career Fair Thursday, September 17, 2015 11:00 am-2:00 pm Grand Sierra Resort & Casino 2500 East Second Street Reno, NV 89595



Thursday, September 17, 2015 09:00 AM to 12:30 PM Suncoast Hotel and Casino 9090 Alta Drive Las Vegas, NV 89145



Thursday, September 24, 2015 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM Texas Station Casino 2101 Texas Star Lane North Las Vegas, NV 89130

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### Northern Nevada Veterans Home Project



Governor Brian Sandoval held a signing ceremony in June of 2015 to allocate \$14 million in state funds to the 96-bed veterans' nursing home which will sit on a plot of land not far from the Truckee River.

State officials expect the federal government to give an additional \$34 million dollars to complete the project late 2016/early 2017.

"We've been working with the architect and nursing home consultants to include up to date design innovations for nursing homes," NDVS Director, Kat Miller said in discussing the project.

The design of the proposed Northern Nevada Veterans Home is an effort of the NDVS to address aging veterans. Design plans have taken into consideration the spacing for wheel-chairs, walkers, and the height of various switches so as to help prevent residents from over-extending and falling.

The proposed site of the project is located on vacant property near the Lakes Crossing facility in Reno.

"Each building will resemble the wings of a butterfly, with a central area in the middle," explained Project Consultant Wendy Simons. The project will also include a connecting veterans nursing clinic, dining hall, administrative section and casual common area. - Senior Spectrum Newspaper in Reno, Nevada

## **Nevada JobConnect Moves Sparks Office**

June 14, 2015 - http://www.kolotv.com/



The Sparks location of the Nevada JobConnect celebrated the opening of its new facility at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday morning.

The office moved from Prater Way to 2281 Pyramid Way.

"We are excited to celebrate this new chapter for the Sparks JobConnect," said Renee Olson, administrator for the Employment Security Division of the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, which oversees Nevada JobConnect. "We appreciate the warm welcome to the neighborhood and appreciate the longstanding partnership we have with the Sparks community. We look forward to continuing our efforts to find innovative ways to provide exemplary employment services to the jobseekers and businesses that have come to depend on us."

The new office is in the Pyramid Professional Center and is on RTC Bus Route 2, which has a bus that stops at the corner of Pyramid and York, where the office is situated.

Nevada JobConnect provides employment-related services at no cost to jobseekers and employers. Jobseeker services include referrals to jobs, job boards, on-line jobs data base, resume-writing assistance, referrals for job training programs, resource centers with computers, and dedicated employment services for Veterans and people with disabilities.

Businesses can take advantage of services such as hiring event/job fair assistance, recruitment, applicant pre-screening, assessments, access to Nevada's largest database of qualified job seekers, Silver State Works business incentives, labor market and economic information, and training resources.

2281 Pyramid Way, Sparks, NV 89431 (775) 284-9520 Open today ·8:00 am - 5:00 pm



### **Labor Day Festivities**



The State of Nevada has several activities and events for Labor Day. Listed below are some of the events that you can attend for the upcoming holiday:

Carson City wants you to Join them 5th annual Comstock Community Rummage Sale on Labor Day weekend in Silver City. The rummage sale is on Saturday and Sunday, September 5th and 6th from 9AM to 5PM at the Silver City Town Park, just 4 miles south of Virginia City off SR 342. Good Deals for a great cause. All proceeds benefit the Preservation of the Comstock Historic District. http://carsonnow.org/reader-content/08/12/2015/fifth-annual-comstock-community-rummage-sale

**Fallon's** activities include live entertainment throughout the weekend, fair exhibits, children's activities, a variety of shopping vendors, 4-H club demonstrations and displays, Lion's Club Labor Day Parade and Jr. Rodeo, and don't forget about the farmer's market, featuring the tasty Hearts of Gold cantaloupe from September 4th thru the 7th. http://falloncantaloupefestival.com/Labor Day

**Henderson** is inviting everyone to a Craft, Vendor and Gift Fair at the Galleria Mall on September 5th thru the 7th. This event will feature handmade crochet, knitting, candles, ceramics, drawings, hair accessories, damsel in defense, Origami Owl, Pink Zebra, Tupperware, Scentsy and so much more. Hours: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

**Laughlin** is celebrating the Labor Day Holiday weekend by hosting an International Gift and Craft Show. This unique show will feature several vendors showcasing beautiful handmade items such as exotic Indian skirts and tops, belly dancing and Zumba apparel, jewelry, scarves, pashminas, Native American jewelry and pottery, pain relieving oils and sea salts, home decorations, candles, picture frames and keepsake boxes, tarot readings, and much more! This family-friendly event has something for everyone. http://www.visitlaughlin.com/event/international-gift-and-craft-show/26080/

**Lake Tahoe** will have a Labor Day Lake Tahoe Fireworks Extravaganza on September 6th. Show begins at 8:30 pm. http://tahoesouth.com/events/labor-day-weekend-fireworks-extravaganza/

**Las Vegas** is proud to present its Craft Show on Labor Day Craft & Gift Show at the Silverton Casino/Veil Pavilion on September 5th. http://festivalnet.com/state/nevada/nv.html

**Pioche** will have its 110th Annual Labor Day Event on September 4th thru 7th . Some of the festivities include: a Cornhole Tournament, ATV Barrel Racing, a Street Dance, Fireworks and a Parade. http://piochenevada.org/laborday.htm

**Reno** will host The Great Reno Balloon Race at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park on September 11th thru the 13th. The Great Reno Balloon Race is the world's largest free hot-air ballooning event. This event is great for those who are not quite done with the Labor Day festivities. For a full schedule of events, visit www.renoballoon.com.

**Sparks** is all about America's biggest and best free rib festival! The 26th annual Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-off will run September 2nd thru September 7th. Live music and great eats. Come out and enjoy the country's best rib competition and the best ribs in the West as we once again transform Victorian Square in downtown Sparks. http://www.visitreno.com/reno\_events/

**Virginia City** wants history come to life for Labor Day with The Great Civil War Days, September 5th thru 7th and a Labor Day Parade, September 7, 2015.

Winnemucca will host a Tri County Fair on September 3rd thru the 6th. This event boasts a rodeo, animal rides, contests, dancing, food and more for details: http://www.labordayfair.com/ and on September 5, 2015 in Downtown Winnemucca there will be an all day parade! http://www.bawn.org/event/winnemucca-labor-day-parade/

**Zephyr Cove** announced that at the Round Hill Plaza Labor Day Show September 4th thru 6th along with Arts and Crafts. http://www.hallst.com/en/event/round-hill-labor-day-show-228342



#### **Veteran Resources**

Armed Forces Vacation Club is built around the idea that our military deserves the best, and that's why we offer weeklong resort stays for just \$349\*.

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Free membership for all active duty, reserve, guard and retired members of the Armed Forces!

To learn more: https://www.afvclub.com/





Holidays can be distressful, especially when loud noises that sound like gunfire and other explosive blasts can trigger post-traumatic stress disorder.

Shawn Gourley designed a sign for veterans that they can display, asking their neighbors to be courteous when igniting fireworks.

The signs are provided free to veterans, although some choose to pay the cost of shipping for their own sign and that of another veteran, about \$15. Signs are paid for with donated money, and veterans can get on the list to receive one through the group's website, ww.militarywithptsd.org.

Get yours today and be prepared for the upcoming holidays.

### **Wreaths Across America**

Their mission is to, Remember, Honor, and Teach. WAA coordinates wreath laying ceremonies in Northern and Southern Nevada. They also organize of events including international veteran's tributes and ceremonies.

The program is dependent on the generosity and donations made by individual wreaths sponsors, corporate and volunteer donors.

To Donate or to Learn More visit: http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/

NDVS has a goal to cover every grave site at the SNVMC and honor all the veterans interred within the cemetery. That number is now over 5,500.

The public is welcome to attend and assist with placing the wreaths following the ceremony.

Nevada Department of Veterans Services I (866) 630-VETS

1(866) 630-8387

Department of Veterans Affairs 1(800) 827-1000

VA Suicide Prevention Hotline I (800) 273-TALK I (800) 273-8255



Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/NevadaWomenVeterans



Twitter: https://twitter.com/NDVS\_WVC



Google+: http://tinyurl.com/NDVSgpage



Website: http://www.veterans.nv.gov/



Instagram: ndvs.wvc





Pinterest: https://www.pinterest.com/NVWVC/



Email: stevensn@veterans.nv.gov



#### **Necole Stevens**

Women Veterans Program Coordinator Nevada Department of Veterans Services

Southern Nevada Healthcare System North Las Vegas VA Medical Center

6900 N Pecos Rd North Las Vegas, Nevada 89086No. Las Vegas, NV 89086

Phone: 702.791.9000 ext



Green Zone Network "Get connected with the Nevada

Veteran Community" Employment, Education and Wellness

www.greenzonenetwork.org

Nevada Department of Veteran Services General Information (866) 630-8387

Visit <u>www.veterans.nv.gov</u>

for information concerning;
Nevada State
Veterans Home
Southern and Northern
Nevada Veteran
Memorial Cemeteries
Veterans Rural Outreach



"Serving America's Heroes"

#### Volume 2, Issue 9 - Women Veterans Informer

## **Honoring Women Veterans**

At the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, we're committed to delivering quality services to all Nevada veterans, and these pages will educate you – a woman veteran who proudly defended our freedom – about benefits and resources.



Women have served the cause of freedom in every war and every generation since the Revolution.

Those we honor number some 1.8 million, including nearly 24,000 women veterans currently residing in Nevada. Today, more than 25 percent of our military strength worldwide is women, and women serve in almost every capacity in the armed forces, including in combat zones on land, at sea and in the skies. More than 177,000 women from across the country have served as fighter pilots, medics, military police and in other roles since the start of the Global War on Terror.

It's all too common for women veterans to pack away their uniforms and memories upon return to civilian life, never to discuss their experiences again. Many women who honorably served don't even realize they're veterans — or realize their eligibility for benefits. Through these pages, we acknowledge your service and offer several resources to help you understand your status and what it means. By working together, we will achieve success in establishing a network to further communication and women veterans outreach.

## **Vision**

Nevadans across the state understand and celebrate the legacy of America's servicewomen and all Nevada women veterans understand and have access to benefits to which they are eligible.

### **Mission**

To provide women veteran benefit and activity information; resolve women veteran problems or refer veterans to NDVS service officers and other beneficial service providers for assistance; and to develop programs and activities that ensure Nevada women veterans understand, and are able to obtain, any aid or benefit to which they may be eligible.

#### Nominate a Woman Vet for Veteran of the Month

To read the Veteran of the Month Guidelines and access submission forms please go to:

http://www.veterans.nv.gov/page/veteran-of-the-month-program

#### **Submit Pictures and Articles**

To submit articles and pictures for publication in the Women Veterans Informer please email the Women Veterans Coordinator at:

StevensN@veterans.nv.gov